

**SUMMARY OF THE
NELAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CHAIRS MEETING
DECEMBER 12, 2002**

The Board of Directors of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on December 12, 2002, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). Past-Chair Ms. Silky Labie, of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, led the meeting in the unavoidable absence of the Chair and Chair-Elect. The agenda for this meeting is shown in Attachment A, new action items are shown in Attachment B, incomplete action items from past meetings are shown in Attachment C, and a list of participants is shown in Attachment D.

AGENDA ITEMS

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Labie opened the meeting by reviewing the minutes and action items of the November 14 & 18, 2002, meetings. The former were accepted as distributed; the latter were accepted as edited.

Response to Report from EPA at NELAC 8i

This item was not addressed, in the absence of Dr. Kimsey.

Update on preparations for NELAC 9

Mr. Edward Kantor reported that he had participated in a recent meeting with the Institute for Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) planning committee for activities at NELAC 9. He noted that INELA and the State of California (the NELAC Chair's home state) have contracted with the hotel and that final scheduling is nearly complete:
<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/nelac> has a link to meeting information. Issues of this initial effort to coordinate INELA and NELAC meeting sessions are being resolved. Mr. Kantor will work with the INELA and NELAC meeting planning committees to get a meeting agenda and fee schedule published as soon as possible.

He noted that various schedule changes are planned, including expanded training sessions, an extensive poster session, an exhibit night, and a session for presentations by participants.

Extension of time for NELAP AAs applications

Ms. Jeanne Hankins reviewed her recommendation to the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) that the scheduled National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accrediting Authority (AA) renewal be postponed six months (see attachment E). Following discussion of this experience-based request, this Board concurs with the attached request by the NELAP director, contingent on concurrence by the AARB. Specifically, the expiration date of the recognition of the accrediting authorities is extended to January 1, 2004. The dates and the timelines for the submission and review of renewal application is adjusted accordingly.

Should the AARB not concur, this Board will reconsider the issues.

NELAC RECOGNITION OF ACCREDITATION TO ISO STANDARD

Mr. Maloney led discussion of NELAC accreditation with respect to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards. Subsequent discussion highlighted the legal constraints on the ability of regulators (state and federal) from accepting accreditation of non-government bodies. It was noted that government regulators may use findings from non-government bodies in determinations. It was also noted that Canadian Association for Environmental Analytical Laboratories (CAEAL) follows this model.

NATIONAL DATABASE

Mr. Kantor reviewed the current status of the NELAC National Database, in terms of the committee's presentation at the Eighth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 8i) and subsequently available information. Independent review of the current database indicates that there are at least seven major flaws to be corrected before it is useable and would cost an amount nominally equal to the current investment. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that there were several contributors to the current failure, including the contracting approach, unplanned requirements changes, interrupted funding, and unstable contractor workforce.

Mr. Kantor reported that EPA is exploring other solutions, however funding seems to now be unavailable.

Based on other information, it appears that EPA's Office of Environmental Information (OEI) may be planning to develop a database that could possibly serve this function. Following discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Labie would explore this possibility.

STATUS OF ELAB

Mr. Kantor reported that the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) is fully functional. As the Designated Federal Official (DFO), he expects to send renewal letters in January and is currently accepting nominations for new members. He expects the renewed charter to be in place, updated and with a narrower scope. He also expressed frustration with the unresponsiveness of some sectors to active membership on the board.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was introduced.

As this was Ms. Hankins final Board meeting as NELAC/NELAP Director prior to her retirement at the end of the month, members expressed their thankfulness for her leadership in the formative years of NELAC.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled as a teleconference on Thursday, January 9, 2003, at 1:30 p.m., Eastern Standard Time (EST).

NELAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DRAFT AGENDA
December 12, 2002
1:30 - 3:30 PM EST

1. Approval of Minutes of November 14 & 18, 2002, Meetings * - *Paul Kimsey*
2. Response to Report from EPA at NELAC 8i - *Paul*
3. Update on preparations for NELAC 9 - *Edward Kantor*
4. Extension of time for NELAP AAs applications - *Jeanne Hankins*
5. NELAC recognition of Accreditation to ISO Standard [†] - *Tom Maloney*
6. National Database - *Edward*
7. Status of ELAB - *Edward*
8. New Business

* Attachment

† See email

**NEW ACTION ITEMS
NELAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS/CHAIRS
DECEMBER 12, 2002**

Item No.	Action	Status
1	Mr. Kantor will work with the INELA and NELAC meeting planning committees to get a meeting agenda and fee schedule published as soon as possible..	ASAP
2	Silky will explore the possibility of an OEI database that could serve the function of the NELAC database.	ASAP

**ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS
NELAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DECEMBER 12, 2002**

NO.	MEETING DATE	ACTION	STATUS
4	8/8/02	Dr. Kimsey to contact NELAC Chairs regarding which standards development organization their committee will join.	Complete
8	9/12/02	Ms. Hankins will recommend to the Regional Lead Evaluators that the observer use a cross-walk along with the state's checklist.	Complete
11	10/10/02	Ms. Labie will check with Sherry Clay on use the OGWDW and ECOS endorsements.	Complete
13	10/10/02	Mr. Kantor will check on the status of a list of interested Standards Development Organizations for discussion at the next meeting.	Complete
14	11/14/02	Dr. Kimsey will review and clarify the essential role of EPA in his remarks during the Opening Plenary session of NELAC 8i.	Complete
15	11/14/02	The Board (Dr. Kimsey) will draft a letter to EPA reiterating their consensus of the role of EPA in NELAC, based on discussions during NELAC 8i.	Ongoing
16	11/14/02	Ms. Aurora Shields will have her good copy of the ECOS letter (see last month's minutes) scanned for this use.	Complete
17	11/18/02	Review Minutes of November 14, 2002	Complete
18	11/18/02	Review EPA's "Laboratory Accreditation Model Study"	Complete

Note: items that were noted as "Complete" in previous minutes have been deleted from this list.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CHAIRS MEETING
DECEMBER 12, 2002**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Dr. Paul Kimsey Chair (absent)	CA Department of Health Services	T: (510)307-8419 F: (510)412-5848 E: pkimsey@dhs.ca.gov
Mr. R. Wayne Davis Chair-Elect (absent)	SC/DHEC Office of Environmental Lab Certification Transition Committee, Chair	T: (803)896-0972 F: (803)896-0850 E: davisrw@dhec.state.sc.us
Ms. Silky Labie Past-Chair	FL Dept. of Environmental Protection Small Organizations Committee, Chair Nominating Committee, Chair	T: (850)488-2796 F: (850)922-4614 E: silky.labie@dep.state.fl.us
Ms. Jeanne Hankins Director	USEPA/ORD	T: (919)541-1120 F: (919)541-4261 E: hankins.jeanne@epa.gov
Mr. Edward Kantor Executive Secretary	USEPA/ORD	T: (702)798-2690 F: (702)798-2261 E: kantor.edward@epa.gov
Ms. Ann Marie Allen	MA Dept. of Environmental Protection	T: (978)682-5237 F: (978)688-0352 E: ann.marie.allen@state.ma.us
Mr. Thomas Maloney	USGS National Water Quality Laboratory	T: (303)236-3460 F: (303)236-3499 E: tmaloney@usgs.gov
Mr. Richard Sheibley	PA Department of Environmental Protection	T: (717)705-2425 F: (717)783-1502 E: rsheibley@state.pa.us
Mr. Joe Slayton	USEPA/Region 3	T: (410)305-2653 F: (410)305-3095 E: slayton.joe@epa.gov
Mr. Gleason Wheatley	KY/Dept. of Environmental Services	T: (502)564-6120 F: (502)564-8930 E: gleason.wheatley@mail.state.ky.us
Ms. Aurora Shields	KS Dept. of Health and Environment	T: (785)296-6198 F: (785)296-8068 E: ashields@kdhe.state.ks.us
Dr. Ken Jackson (Invited Guest)	NY Environmental Laboratory Approval Program Program Policy & Structure Committee, Chair	T: (518) 485-5570 F: (518) 485-5568 E: jackson@wadsworth.org
Dr. Gene Tatsch (Contractor Support)	RTI	T: 919-541-6930 F: 828-628-0659 E: cet@rti.org



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NATIONAL EXPOSURE RESEARCH LABORATORY
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC 27711

OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

13 March 2003

Ms. Judy Duncan
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
PO Box 1677
Oklahoma City, OK 73101-1677

Dear Ms. Duncan:

I would appreciate it if the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) would provide an opinion on delaying the upcoming renewal process for the original eleven (11) NELAP recognized Accrediting Authorities (NELAP AA) by six months.

During the December 3, 2002, meeting of the NELAP AAs, there was strong support for modifying the requirements in Chapter 6 (Accrediting Authority) for the length of the term of recognition. The unanimous position was that the term should be for a period of three years with an on-site evaluation and an observation of the NELAP AA's on-site assessment of a laboratory also on a three year cycle. There was strong support for this position from the EPA Regions also. As you are aware, the current term is four years with an on-site evaluation and an interim renewal with an observation of an on-site assessment of two years.

The NELAP AAs believe that the interim renewal process adds little value to the process. The interim renewal required a great deal of time and energy on the part of the NELAP AAs and the NELAP evaluation teams without a corresponding benefit. In addition, a three year term would increase the frequency of the on-site evaluation and the observation of the on-site assessments, which should prove to be an excellent mechanism to assure the uniformity of the program across the state programs. Due to the extensive time needed to complete the interim process, some states have fairly recently received their renewal certificates and will now need to restart the application process.

The NELAP AAs will be proposing language to the Accrediting Authority Committee in the near future with the recommendation that it be implemented immediately upon passage of the standards. If the standards are approved with the modified language, that means that the renewal for those eleven states would not begin until January 2004; thus, the reasoning for a six month extension.

A contributing factor for delaying the renewal applications is that it is still uncertain when a new NELAP Director will be permanently installed. To date, the search for a replacement has not been initiated. Therefore, one could expect a delay of at least six weeks from the time an announcement is made through the EPA EZHire process.

I would greatly appreciate a response before the next NELAC Board of Directors meeting (December 12, 2002), if at all possible. Since the renewal date is January 1, 2003, it is important to reach a decision before the end of the month.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Hankins
NELAP Director

cc NELAC Board of Directors
 NELAP Accrediting Authorities

